

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY
HEARING ON THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE CORPORATION FOR
NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE
TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2002**

Today's hearing is about one of the greatest strengths of the American people – our willingness to lend a helping hand to our neighbors, our communities, our nation, and our world.

We have welcomed and aided refugees. We have joined the Peace Corps. We have volunteered at soup kitchens, places of worship, community centers, and schools.

And now, with September 11th, that great spirit of volunteerism is stirring in Americans once again. We saw ordinary Americans risk their lives to help others. And no citizen could experience that tragic day without a renewed commitment to country, to community, to family.

That is why today's hearing is so important. It is about our government's programs to provide Americans with ways to express our common spirit through voluntary service.

Our challenge today is to match the demand for service by our citizens with meaningful opportunities to make a difference in people's lives. But in many ways, we still are missing the mark. A recent study by Robert Putnam at Harvard University found that interest in service has risen in recent months. But only one in seven Americans is volunteering regularly – the same level of service as a decade ago.

Clearly, we must do more to make Americans aware of service opportunities. A citizen's

first encounter when wanting to serve should not be a confusing federal bureaucracy. We should look at ways to create easy pathways so that every American can serve.

It is now almost a decade since Congress created the Corporation for National Service to enhance opportunities for all Americans to contribute to their communities by actively engaging in local service programs. Every week, I have the privilege of reading with a student in Washington at the Brent School in a program that my colleague and friend Senator Jeffords brought to the District, Everybody Wins. I have seen her impressive progress during the last five years. I know first-hand that those who engage in community service gain as much as they give.

The Corporation for National Service has greatly expanded opportunities to serve for people of all ages. Since 1996, over 150,000 adults have committed a year of service through AmeriCorps. These Corps members have tutored and mentored students, rebuilt communities and improved the lives of people of all ages.

And AmeriCorps is just a part of the success story. Nearly 300,000 talented senior citizens have contributed over 125 million hours of service — giving back to the communities that they helped to build over their lifetimes.

And one of the most impressive projects of all is the Learn and Serve program. The Corporation supports programs for more than 1.5 million students to integrate community service into the academic curriculum. According to the Learning in Deed study conducted by the Glenn Commission and the Kellogg Foundation earlier this year, service learning helps students to develop

an enduring sense of civic and social responsibility, improves student engagement in school and can lead to improved achievement.

We know that lifelong habits of service have to begin at an early age. Young children who see the positive difference that they can make in their communities will want to continue to make that difference throughout their lives. Since 1995 the appropriations for Learn and Serve have remained at \$43 million. We need to expand this vital program so that every school that wants to begin a program can get the technical assistance that it needs.

I am encouraged that the President has called on Americans of every generation to serve their communities. I commend him for making service to our communities and to our country a priority in his Administration.

The programs created by the Corporation for National Service are key avenues of service available to all Americans through the state commissions, groups such as City Year or Public Allies that are funded directly by the Corporation, America's Promise, and the Points of Light Foundation. These programs have gained impressive community and corporate support and created new opportunities to serve. Let's build on that support to take service to the next level.

I want to welcome Dr. Les Lenkowsky to our hearing today. You have been an important part of the Corporation since the beginning, first as a Board member and now as CEO. We're fortunate to have someone with your expertise and interest and I look forward to your testimony.